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Death cuts down archeological expedition

King Tut's curse defies the ages

By DOANE HOAG

THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS, Egypt, Feb. 15, 1922 — Brilliant tropical moonlight flooded across the deserts as Lord Carnarvon went out to the excavation where, in the morning, he planned to open the long lost tomb of King Tutankhamen. As he neared the "diggings," a shadowy figure approached him. The man was an Egyptian, but one whom Carnarvon had never seen before. He gave a start.

"Forgive me, Effendi," the Egyptian said. "I did not intend to frighten you."

"What do you want?"

"Only to warn you, Effendi. This



tomb has a curse upon it. If you enter it tomorrow, as you plan, you will die. You, and all who enter with you."

Lord Carnarvon thanked him, but smiled to himself. He had heard of the famous curse before. In fact, even Arthur Weigall, a noted archeologist himself, had warned him. But Carnarvon had spent five years searching for the lost tomb of the boy-king of ancient Egypt, and he was not to be put off now. The next morning, the official party from the Egyptian government gathered around. The last shovelfuls of sand and rubble were dug away from the door and the tomb of a man who had been dead for 3,300 years, was formally opened.

As the head of the expedition, Carnarvon was the first to enter the sepulchral chamber. As he did so, something stung him on the cheek. He thought nothing of it at the time, but within six weeks Lord Carnarvon was dead. The doctors called it erysipelas (a strep skin infection), but were baffled by the quickness with which death had come to such a strong and healthy man. And when the mummy of the long dead Pharaoh was unwrapped, a very strange fact was discovered. On the right cheek of the corpse there was a tiny scar in exactly the same place as the sting on Lord Carnarvon's cheek.

With the party at the time of the official opening of the tomb was Col. Meyers, Carnarvon's half-brother. Within one year he, too, was dead.

Another member of the party was H.G. Evelyn-White, a famous Egyptologist. A year later he committed suicide, leaving a letter behind saying



rayed the mummy. Within a year, he was dead.

Prof. Laffleur, the first American scientist to enter the tomb, died four months later.

Seven French journalists were allowed to visit the tomb. They were all young men. But six of them died mysteriously within the next two years.

Woolf Joel visited the tomb a few days after its opening. He was dead before the year was out.

Jay Gould, the American financier, was taken ill while he was in the tomb. He died a few weeks later. The attending physicians diagnosed the ailment as pneumonia.

Almost every one of the Egyptian workmen who had helped to uncover the tomb died under unexplained circumstances soon afterwards.

Skeptics said that the deaths were just coincidence. But Dr. Robert Marden, a well-known scientist, said, "The ancient Egyptians were possessed of the secret of surrounding their dead with some kind of dynamic force. What it is, we haven't the slightest idea."

Whatever it was, it didn't give up easily. For years after the opening of the tomb, people even distantly connected with it seemed to be plagued with strange accidents.

Sir Lee Stack was assassinated in Cairo two years after entering the tomb.

Sir Percival Lorraine was struck by a streetcar.

Dr. Jonathan Carver died in an auto accident seven years later.

Richard Bethell died of an unexplained illness the same year. A few weeks later his father, Lord Westbury, became mentally disturbed and leaped out a six-story window to his death. On the way to the cemetery the hearse carrying his body struck a child and killed him instantly.

The only person closely connected with the opening of the tomb who did not appear to suffer ill-effects was Howard Carter. He died, but of perfectly natural causes, in 1939.

To this day there have been no answers to the mystery. Instead, new mysteries have cropped up. It appears now that a prolonged stay in a pyramid can have a damaging effect on the human brain.

Evelyn-White became mentally disturbed and committed suicide. Paul Bunton, an explorer, spent a night in the inner gallery of the Khufu pyramid. He was carried out the next morning in a state of nervous collapse, and later described terrifying visions similar to those caused by LSD.

In 1942, Prof. George Reisner, who had made the first radio broadcast from inside a pyramid, collapsed while in the tomb of Hetepheres. He was completely paralyzed, and died a few hours after being rescued.

The only clue is the mysterious stone tablet that was found in the tomb of Tutankhamen. When translated, the hieroglyphics were found to read: "Death will slay with his wings any who disturb the peace of the pharaoh."

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